



Bureau of Labor Statistics

Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

Internet address: <http://www.bls.gov/ro3/home.htm>

INFORMATION: Thomas McGettigan  
(215) 597-3282

MEDIA CONTACT: Gerald Perrins  
(215) 861-5600

PLS – 3936

TRANSMISSION OF MATERIAL IN  
THIS RELEASE IS EMBARGOED  
UNTIL 8:30 A.M. (EST)  
FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2003

## PHILADELPHIA-WILMINGTON-ATLANTIC CITY CONSUMER PRICE INDEX: FEBRUARY 2003

Retail prices in the Philadelphia area, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), rose 0.7 percent between December and February, following a 0.3 percent decrease in the previous two-month period, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that while increases in housing and transportation indexes led the rise, virtually all major categories had higher prices since December; only apparel prices were lower in February. The CPI-U for the Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) was 2.5 percent higher in February 2003 than 12 months ago. (See table A.)

Table A. Percent changes in CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City area, not seasonally adjusted

Expenditure category	Change for two months ended			Change for 12 months ended
	Oct. 2002	Dec. 2002	Feb. 2003	Feb. 2003
All items	-1.3	-0.3	0.7	2.5
Food & beverages	0.6	0.4	0.9	2.3
Housing	-4.2	0.1	0.8	2.2
Apparel	8.6	-9.1	-4.3	-5.8
Transportation	0.3	0.0	1.2	4.7
Medical care	0.7	1.2	1.0	4.4
Recreation	0.3	-0.4	2.1	1.4
Education & communication	0.2	0.0	0.3	4.1
Other goods & services	-0.5	-0.3	0.8	3.8
Special indexes:				
Energy	-3.6	1.4	5.0	16.1
Commodities	1.4	-1.1	0.5	1.7
Services	-2.9	0.2	0.8	3.0

Following normal seasonal patterns, the housing index was up 0.8 percent over the last two months, due mainly to higher prices for shelter, in particular other lodging away from home including hotels and motels. Shelter prices, which include rent of primary residence, owners' equivalent rent of primary residence, lodging away from home, and tenants' and household insurance, rose 0.6 since December and were 3.2 percent higher over the year. The fuels and utilities index rose 2.5 percent over the last two months due almost entirely to increased prices for fuel oil and water and sewerage maintenance. Natural gas and electricity, two other components of the fuels and utilities index, moved in opposite directions since December. Natural gas prices rose 0.3 percent over the last two months and were 1.3 percent higher than last year, while electricity prices edged down 0.2 percent since December and were 0.5 percent below year-ago levels. Moderating the overall rise in the housing

index were lower prices for household furnishings and operations. The household furnishings and operations index fell for the fourth consecutive bimonthly period, down 5.5 percent since June. Due to the recent declines, prices were 6.2 percent lower than last year. The overall housing index rose 2.2 percent since February 2002.

The transportation index rose 1.2 percent over the last two months, due almost entirely to higher gasoline prices. The gasoline index, which is published monthly by the Bureau, jumped 7.0 percent in February, following a 2.2 percent increase in January. Due to price advances in 8 of the last 12 months, gasoline prices were 45.2 percent higher than last year—the largest 12-month increase since March 2000. Higher-priced airline fares also contributed to the recent advance in transportation prices. The overall transportation index was 4.7 percent higher than year-ago levels.

Food and beverages prices rose 0.9 percent since December, due in large part to higher prices for food at home. The monthly food at home index rose 3.8 percent in February, after falling 2.4 percent in January. The recent advance was the largest one-month increase since August 1973, but food at home prices were only 0.5 percent higher than last year, reflecting one-month declines in 7 of the last 12 months. Food away from home prices rose 0.8 percent since December and were 5.1 percent higher over the last 12 months. Moderating the rise in food and beverage prices were lower prices for alcoholic beverages, down 1.1 percent over the last two months and 0.9 percent over the year. Since last February, the overall food and beverages index increased 2.3 percent.

Due in part to higher prices for admissions, the recreation index rose 2.1 percent in February. Over the last 12 months, the index rose 1.4 percent. Medical care prices rose for the fourth straight bimonthly period, advancing 4.5 percent since June. Higher prices for medical care services, in particular professional services, were responsible for the recent rise.

Following two consecutive bimonthly periods of decrease, the other goods and services index, which includes tobacco and smoking products, personal care products and services such as legal, funeral, and laundry and dry cleaning services, rose 0.8 percent since December and was 3.8 percent higher over the year. The education and communication index edged up 0.3 percent in February due in part to higher prices for telephone services. Since last February, the index rose 4.1 percent.

The only major category to record lower prices between December and February was apparel, which fell 4.3 percent over the last two months following a seasonal 9.1 percent drop in December. Lower prices for women's dresses and footwear were mainly responsible for the recent decline. Due to declines in four of the last six bimonthly periods, apparel prices were down 5.8 percent over the year.

The energy index, which reflects monthly pricing for gasoline and household fuels, rose 3.8 percent in February, following a 1.2 percent rise in January. The February increase was due almost entirely to higher gasoline and fuel oil prices, as lower electricity prices were nearly offset by higher natural gas prices. Over the year, the energy index rose 16.1 percent—the largest 12-month increase in nearly three years.

In February, the CPI-U stood at 186.6 on the 1982-84=100 reference base, which means that a market basket of goods and services that cost \$100.00 in 1982-84 would have cost \$186.60 last month. The local Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers Index (CPI-W) rose 0.5 percent over the last two months and stood at 185.9 on the 1982-84 base. (See table 2.)

The Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City, PA-DE-NJ-MD, area includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties in Pennsylvania; Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties in New Jersey; New Castle County in Delaware; and Cecil County in Maryland.

Note: Local area indexes are by-products of the national CPI program. Because each local index is a small subset of the national index, it has a smaller sample size and is therefore subject to substantially more sampling and other measurement error than the national index. As a result, area indexes show greater volatility than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. Short-term changes in local indexes may reflect strictly seasonal influences.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City, PA-NJ-DE-MD (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

Expenditure category	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2003	Feb. 2002	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003
All items .....	185.3	-	186.6	2.5	0.7	-
All items (1967=100) .....	535.4	-	539.0	-	-	-
Food and beverages .....	173.6	-	175.2	2.3	.9	-
Food .....	173.2	-	175.0	2.5	1.0	-
Food at home .....	180.7	176.3	183.0	.5	1.3	3.8
Food away from home .....	158.8	-	160.0	5.1	.8	-
Alcoholic beverages .....	175.3	-	173.3	-.9	-1.1	-
Housing .....	186.6	-	188.0	2.2	.8	-
Shelter .....	224.3	224.2	225.7	3.2	.6	.7
Rent of primary residence (1).....	205.8	206.7	207.9	2.6	1.0	.6
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence (1) (2).....	231.1	231.1	230.2	2.3	-.4	-.4
Fuels and utilities (3).....	141.6	-	145.2	3.9	2.5	-
Fuels (4).....	128.4	129.3	131.6	3.6	2.5	1.8
Gas (piped) and electricity (1) .....	143.9	144.0	143.9	.1	.0	-.1
Electricity (1).....	143.5	143.2	143.2	-.5	-.2	.0
Utility natural gas service (1) .....	149.8	150.6	150.2	1.3	.3	-.3
Household furnishings and operations .....	119.4	-	118.3	-6.2	-.9	-
Apparel .....	99.6	-	95.3	-5.8	-4.3	-
Transportation .....	158.2	-	160.1	4.7	1.2	-
Private transportation .....	155.1	-	157.0	5.2	1.2	-
Motor fuel .....	127.2	130.0	139.1	45.0	9.4	7.0
Gasoline (all types) .....	125.3	128.1	137.1	45.2	9.4	7.0
Gasoline, unleaded regular (5).....	125.2	129.0	138.3	48.1	10.5	7.2
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade (5) (6)....	122.4	124.3	133.2	44.2	8.8	7.2
Gasoline, unleaded premium (5).....	117.6	119.6	126.8	40.7	7.8	6.0
Medical care .....	333.9	-	337.1	4.4	1.0	-
Recreation (7).....	106.8	-	109.0	1.4	2.1	-
Education and communication (7).....	109.2	-	109.5	4.1	.3	-
Other goods and services .....	314.9	-	317.4	3.8	.8	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities .....	145.8	-	146.5	1.7	.5	-
Commodities less food and beverages .....	128.9	-	129.2	1.5	.2	-
Nondurables less food and beverages .....	139.5	-	140.8	6.1	.9	-
Durables .....	115.8	-	115.0	-4.3	-.7	-
Services .....	226.5	-	228.3	3.0	.8	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less medical care .....	178.8	-	180.0	2.4	.7	-
All items less shelter .....	173.7	-	174.9	2.2	.7	-
Commodities less food .....	130.7	-	131.0	1.4	.2	-
Nondurables .....	156.9	-	158.3	4.0	.9	-
Nondurables less food .....	141.9	-	143.0	5.5	.8	-
Services less rent of shelter (2) .....	234.6	-	236.8	2.8	.9	-
Services less medical care services .....	217.8	-	219.3	2.8	.7	-
Energy .....	126.1	127.6	132.4	16.1	5.0	3.8
All items less energy .....	193.4	-	194.1	1.6	.4	-
All items less food and energy .....	199.0	-	199.4	1.4	.2	-

1 This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series converted to a geometric means estimator in January, 1999.

2 Indexes on a December 1982=100 base.

3 Revised index for Chicago-Gary-Kenosha: Jan. 2003=132.2.

4 Revised index for Chicago-Gary-Kenosha: Jan. 2003=131.1.

5 Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

6 Indexes on a December 1993=100 base.

7 Indexes on a December 1997=100 base.

- Data not available.

NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.

Table 2. Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W):Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City, PA-NJ-DE-MD (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

Expenditure category	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2003	Feb. 2002	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003
All items .....	184.9	-	185.9	2.5	0.5	-
All items (1967=100) .....	537.0	-	540.0	-	-	-
Food and beverages .....	175.2	-	177.3	2.5	1.2	-
Food .....	174.6	-	176.8	2.6	1.3	-
Food at home .....	180.4	175.6	183.0	.5	1.4	4.2
Food away from home .....	160.3	-	161.9	6.1	1.0	-
Alcoholic beverages .....	180.0	-	178.3	-.4	-.9	-
Housing .....	188.3	-	189.2	1.9	.5	-
Shelter .....	228.7	228.8	229.7	2.9	.4	.4
Rent of primary residence (1).....	205.8	206.7	207.9	2.6	1.0	.6
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence (1) (2).....	205.5	205.5	204.7	2.2	-.4	-.4
Fuels and utilities .....	141.4	-	144.2	3.1	2.0	-
Fuels .....	127.2	127.9	129.5	2.6	1.8	1.3
Gas (piped) and electricity (1) .....	143.2	143.3	143.2	.1	.0	-.1
Electricity (1).....	143.5	143.2	143.2	-.5	-.2	.0
Utility natural gas service (1) .....	149.8	150.6	150.2	1.3	.3	-.3
Household furnishings and operations .....	117.9	-	117.0	-6.9	-.8	-
Apparel .....	100.8	-	94.7	-6.9	-6.1	-
Transportation .....	160.1	-	162.6	6.5	1.6	-
Private transportation .....	157.7	-	160.4	7.1	1.7	-
Motor fuel .....	127.2	130.0	139.1	45.0	9.4	7.0
Gasoline (all types) .....	125.3	128.1	137.1	45.2	9.4	7.0
Gasoline, unleaded regular (3).....	125.2	129.0	138.3	48.1	10.5	7.2
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade (3) (4)....	122.4	124.3	133.2	44.2	8.8	7.2
Gasoline, unleaded premium (3).....	117.7	119.6	126.8	40.7	7.7	6.0
Medical care .....	326.0	-	329.4	4.6	1.0	-
Recreation (5).....	106.6	-	108.1	-.2	1.4	-
Education and communication (5).....	109.3	-	109.6	3.4	.3	-
Other goods and services .....	319.3	-	321.0	4.6	.5	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities .....	150.4	-	151.2	2.2	.5	-
Commodities less food and beverages .....	133.5	-	133.5	2.0	.0	-
Nondurables less food and beverages .....	140.0	-	140.4	6.1	.3	-
Durables .....	121.0	-	120.4	-4.4	-.5	-
Services .....	226.2	-	227.5	2.7	.6	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less medical care .....	179.7	-	180.6	2.4	.5	-
All items less shelter .....	173.1	-	174.1	2.3	.6	-
Commodities less food .....	135.4	-	135.3	1.8	-.1	-
Nondurables .....	158.4	-	159.7	4.1	.8	-
Nondurables less food .....	142.7	-	143.0	5.7	.2	-
Services less rent of shelter (2) .....	203.0	-	204.5	2.6	.7	-
Services less medical care services .....	218.7	-	219.8	2.6	.5	-
Energy .....	123.7	125.1	129.5	16.2	4.7	3.5
All items less energy .....	193.7	-	194.1	1.4	.2	-
All items less food and energy .....	199.6	-	199.5	1.1	-.1	-

1 This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series converted to a geometric means estimator in January, 1999.

2 Indexes on a December 1984=100 base

3 Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

4 Indexes on a December 1993=100 base.

5 Indexes on a December 1997=100 base.

- Data not available.

NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.